

Employer-Assisted Housing: A Solution to the workforce housing issue in New Hampshire

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Abstract

Affordable housing is lacking in New Hampshire. To keep New Hampshire's economy vibrant and diverse, we must look to new and creative affordable housing solutions to help New Hampshire's workforce stay strong and its businesses stay competitive. One possible solution is Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH). Employer-Assisted Housing programs can provide direct financial assistance, as well as home buyer and financial fitness education to New Hampshire's workforce. Employees who have access to EAH programs are able to reduce commute times, have more stable home environments, better attitudes, and are less likely to leave their place of employment. Employers who provide EAH programs have benefited by increased recruitment, reduced turnover, increased company morale and have become leaders in their industry. EAH programs have proven to be a cost effective way to help bridge the gap of housing affordability for low and moderate-income workers. This paper illustrates how a creative and simple Employer-Assisted Housing partnership between the public and private sector can effectively help ease the workforce housing issue within our state.

Executive Summary

Affordable housing is lacking in New Hampshire. The affects of this deficiency of affordable housing is limiting our ability to provide safe and decent housing for our workforce. The impact this will have on New Hampshire's economy has been documented. In fact, it has been estimated that the "lack of adequate workforce housing will cost the state; 1,300 to 2,800 fewer jobs; \$57 to \$121 million less in personal income; \$123 to \$253 million reduction in Gross State Product; and \$21 to \$33 million less in state and local revenues" (Shapiro, 2005). To keep New Hampshire vibrant and diverse, we must look to new and creative affordable housing solutions to help New Hampshire's workforce stay strong and its businesses stay competitive.

One possible solution to assist low and moderate-income employees of businesses throughout the state is Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH). Employer-Assisted Housing programs can provide down payment and closing cost assistance, as well as home buyer and financial fitness education. Employees who have access to EAH programs are able to reduce commute times to work, have more stable home environments, better attitudes, and are less likely to leave their place of employment. Employers who have implemented EAH programs have benefited by increased recruitment, reduced turnover, increased company morale and have become leaders in their industry. EAH programs have proven to be a cost effective way to help employer's bridge the gap of housing affordability for their low and moderate-income workforce.

Based on the model presented by the Metropolitan Planning Council of Chicago Illinois, this thesis proposes the creation of an Employer-Assisted Housing program utilizing the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority's Community Development Investment Program (CDIP). Businesses that contribute to the CDIP fund can receive a state tax credit of up

to 75% of their donation. The CDFA allocates these state tax credits on a competitive basis to non-profits for specific projects or programs that address economic development and affordable/workforce housing issues that affect low and moderate-income residents of our state (NHCDFA, 2008). By donating money to an Employer-Assisted Housing program, businesses would not only receive state tax credits but would be able to provide an EAH benefit to their employees. The EAH funds would be used for down payment and closing cost assistance. The EAH program would be administered by a non-profit partner. Local non-profit housing counseling agencies would provide professional home ownership education and counseling services to qualified home buyers.

The collaboration between local businesses, the CDIP program and a non-profit partner seem a perfect fit. Problems with housing can have a negative impact on both people and businesses. Creative partnerships need to be formed in order to provide useful and effective solutions to meet the needs of our communities.

Community Needs Assessment

New Hampshire provides a unique place for individuals and families to live, work, and play. The opportunity for job growth and a decent quality of life is strong throughout the state. At a recent panel discussion hosted by the Nashua Chamber of Commerce, Robert Tannenwald, Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, stated that “New Hampshire's job growth will surpass the rest of New England. The rate is expected to hit 1.9% in this state, versus a 0.7% average for New England as a whole” (Nashua Telegraph, 2008). New Hampshire’s unemployment rate also continues to be consistently lower than that of the United States and New England (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2008). Additionally, CNN Money recently rated the New Hampshire town of Hanover as the number two place in the country to live (money.cnn.com, 2007), while CQ Press voted New Hampshire the most livable state in the nation for the fifth year in a row (CQ Press, 2008).

In spite of this positive news, there are growing concerns about the lack of low to moderate-income employees available in the state. New Hampshire is a great place to live, but why are so many employers still unable to find a suitable workforce? Furthermore, why is New Hampshire losing its young workforce at an alarming rate? New Hampshire demographer Peter Francese, in his recent book *Community and Consequences*, notes, “The most significant and potentially most harmful consequence is the high out-migration of young adults. This exodus will leave New Hampshire with a slowing workforce growth, declining number of children – the future workforce – and a population aging at an even faster rate due to increasing numbers of older residents” (Francese, 2008).

The concern for the economic impact of youth migration out of New Hampshire is so strong that large institutions are taking notice. Recently, the University System of New

Hampshire launched its “55% Initiative” where they are looking to convince 55% of their graduates to live and work in New Hampshire. “New Hampshire is a great state in which to live. Yet, we face a looming crisis. The state’s population is the sixth oldest nationally and many baby boomers are close to retirement. Employers are having trouble finding skilled workers, and college graduates are leaving the state at too high a rate to meet employment needs (www.usnh.edu, 2008).” With all the positive economic data and the high quality of life New Hampshire has to offer, what is driving many of the young people to leave our communities? Home ownership is but one nail in the community economic development tool kit that helps move low to moderate-income individuals out of the cycle of poverty and into an environment where individuals and families can take advantage of wealth building, stability and community. The current median purchase price for all homes in New Hampshire is \$244,000 (New Hampshire Housing, Purchase Price Database, 2007). New Hampshire has a home ownership rate of 72% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey). This is slightly higher than the national home ownership rate of 68% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey). However, data directly from first-time home buyer seminars conducted by New Hampshire Housing, suggests that first-time home buyers are well below the 2007 statewide median family income of \$71,176. The data shows that 80% of first-time home buyers in the state are making under \$57,000 per year in income (Andrew Cadorette, First-Time Home Buyer Seminar Survey). Affordability issues push low to moderate-income buyers out of the home buying market and may even push them out of our state. Thus one reason many young workers may be leaving the state is because of the lack of affordable housing.

The lack of affordable housing has been well documented in New Hampshire. Affordable housing “is defined as housing for individuals of low and moderate income (LMI) in

which rent does not require more than 30% of income. A low-income household earns less than 50% of the median family income and a moderate-income household earns less than 80% of the median family income” (Goffstown Master Plan Update 2006, Appendix E Housing, Section C). In reviewing its housing needs, one New Hampshire community noted that the “pace of housing production during the past decade was inadequate to provide adequate housing choice – the region added nearly 5,000 new households but the housing inventory grew by only 2,800 units” (Upper Valley Housing Needs Analysis: Summary Report, August 2002). Additionally from their analysis, this has resulted in home appreciation almost three times faster than area incomes. The Upper Valley Housing Coalition estimates that 25% of the area’s population is facing a housing crisis (Upper Valley Housing Needs Analysis: Summary Report, August 2002). According to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, families and individuals at 80% of the statewide median income only had access to 16% of the available housing units sold in 2005 (Bill Ray, Housing Options: For Those With Disabilities Conference, 2007). The lack of affordable housing throughout New Hampshire has driven the cost of housing far out of reach for most low to moderate-income residents. Without a proactive approach to address affordable housing issue, New Hampshire may be jeopardizing its position as a great place to live and work.

Workforce housing is defined as “single-family homes, town houses, condominiums, starter homes, and apartments that are affordable to area workers” (Francese, 2008). Workforce housing provides homes for the teachers at our local schools, staff at our town halls and labor for our local businesses. People that need workforce housing are the people we need to keep our communities healthy and businesses strong. In a 2005 survey of approximately one hundred New Hampshire employers, most identified housing costs and housing availability as concern for their employees (New Hampshire Workforce Housing Council, 2005). In New Hampshire, the

workforce housing issue and the affordable housing issue are one in the same. According to a report by The New Hampshire Workforce Housing Council, “lack of adequate workforce housing will cost the state; 1,300 to 2,800 fewer jobs; \$57 to \$121 million in less personal income; \$123 to \$253 million reduction in Gross State Product; and \$21 to \$33 million less in state and local revenues” (Shapiro, 2005). To keep New Hampshire vibrant and diverse, we must look at workforce/affordable housing as one piece of the puzzle for a strong economy.

Problem Identification

If low and moderate-income individuals and families cannot afford to live in New Hampshire, they will leave to seek employment elsewhere. This flight of our workforce will have lasting impact on our economy. New Hampshire policy makers and business leaders need to take steps now to avoid a future workforce crunch. Take just one simple example of the disparity between low and moderate-income workers and housing affordability. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual income for a fire fighter in New Hampshire is

\$40,269 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Using the affordability model of not exceeding 30% of one's income for housing, the maximum mortgage amount a

How much can a fire fighter in New Hampshire afford?

Median annual income:	\$40,269
Term:	30 years
Fixed rate:	6.5%
Taxes and insurance:	3% (estimated)
Monthly payment:	\$1007.00 (30% of monthly income)
Loan amount:	<u>\$114,200.00</u>
Median purchase price in New Hampshire:	<u>\$244,000.00</u>

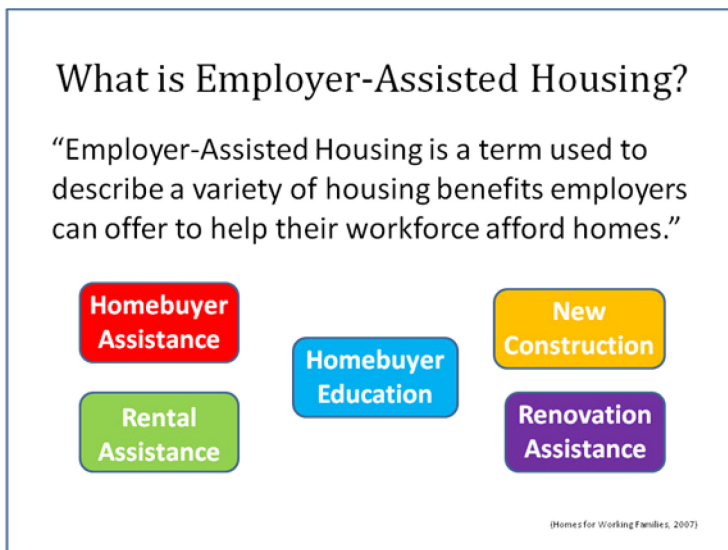
typical fire fighter in New Hampshire can afford is \$114,200. This is well below our statewide median purchase price of \$244,000. As one New Hampshire newspaper recently reported, “Young people are leaving the city and leaving the state. The Seacoast isn’t dealing with the cost of housing. The canary in the coal mine is the employer. If we get known as the state where you can’t find a work force, that image can start to drive the data” (Dornin, 2007, www.seacoastonline.com.)

One possible solution for New Hampshire’s workforce housing shortage that has been overlooked by many communities and businesses is the idea of Employer-Assisted Housing

(EAH). “Employer-Assisted Housing is a term used to describe a variety of housing benefits employers can offer to help their workforce afford homes” (Home for Working Families, 2008).

In the early years of our nation, Employer-Assisted Housing meant mill worker housing. Employer-Assisted Housing was common place in the many textile mills throughout New England. In retrospect, the EAH of the past was unfortunately a simple means to obtain and indenture a cheap labor force for sweatshop manufacturing.

Today EAH, however, has undergone a renaissance in many tight labor and housing



markets. Strong business and community leaders have modernized and renewed EAH by utilizing it to provide new workforce housing options to their employees and constituents. This modern EAH concept is just one tool that can help re-align the mismatch between low to moderate-income

individuals and families and affordable housing. This in turn will help revitalize neighborhoods and provide local employers with a qualified and sufficient workforce.

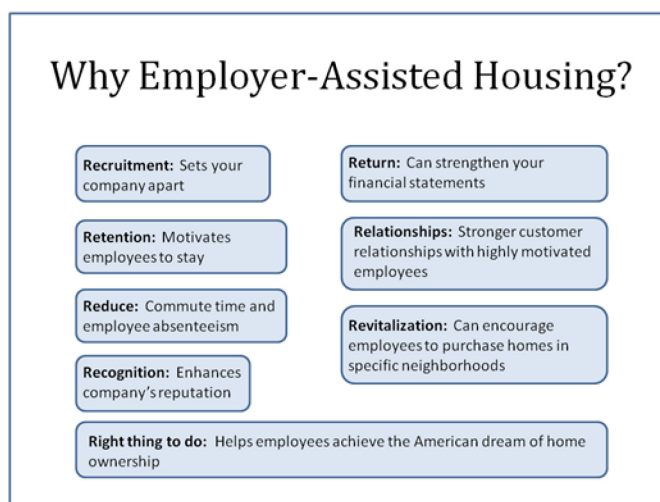
Literature Review

According to a report by NeighborWorks and the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University “Six million of America’s working families currently have critical housing needs. EAH is one of the principal initiatives that is likely to increase opportunities in the housing market for these working families, while benefiting the economy” (Pill, 2000).

Employer-Assisted Housing programs today provide employers a unique opportunity to meet their needs and the housing needs of their employees.

In recent years, a number of publications have come out in strong support of EAH. Employer-Assisted Housing programs address the four “Rs” of why it would appeal to employers: employee recruitment, employee retention, neighborhood revitalization, and community relations (Pill, 2000).

Additionally, competition between companies and regions may also be a significant driver behind a company’s choice to offer an EAH program (Pill, 2000). In a recent article titled *New Arguments for Employer-Assisted*



Housing, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston states that “there are compelling reasons for employers, public agencies, and housing groups in New England to consider promoting comprehensive, policy-oriented EAH collaborations. These collaborations can help build constituencies for affordable housing, effect policy change, raise the profile of community-based housing organizations, increase employees’ access to affordable housing, and improve organizations’ ability to attract and retain workers (Afsher, 2006).”

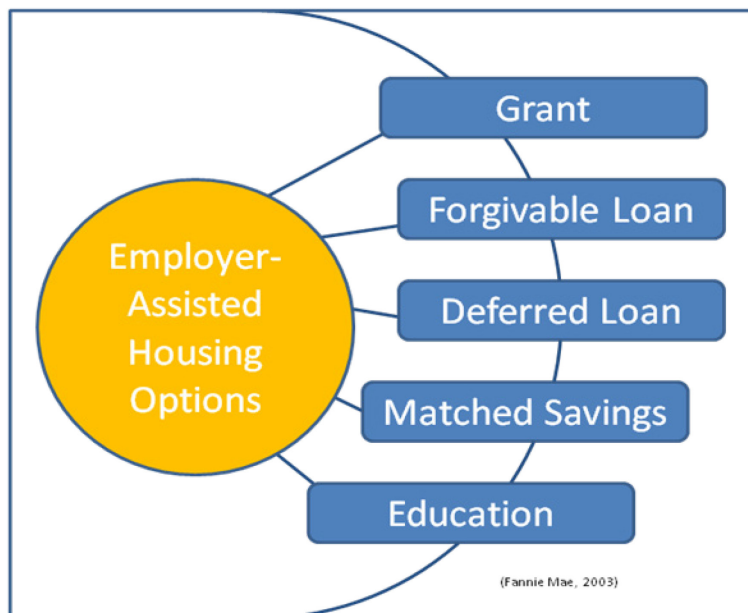
What makes today's EAP different from employer housing programs of the past has been recently documented in the publication *Understanding Employer-Assisted Housing – A Guidebook for Employers* produced by Homes for Working Families. Flexibility, partnership and serving a community need mark the EAH programs of today. EAH programs enable employees to live closer to the workplace, create safer neighborhoods, increase community investment and help employees achieve a better quality of life (Home for Working Families, 2008). For the employer, EAH programs are a recruitment tool, they reduce turnover and tardiness, boost employee morale, and increase business competitiveness.

Home for Working Families documented 10 case studies where employers reached beyond conventional thinking and created EAH programs to address their employee's need for affordable housing. In doing so, these businesses have become industry leaders in their communities and great places to work. One example documented in the report is Citizens Financial Group.

In 2002, Citizens Financial Group Inc. (CFG), a major financial institution in New England, created an EAH program for its employees. CFG sees the EAH program as a win-win situation for them and their employees. Since CFG created their EAH program, they have positioned themselves as a reputable employer, a responsible corporate citizen, and a welcomed community partner the program has proven invaluable in promoting employee loyalty, increasing recruitment and retention (Home for Working Families, 2008). CFG chose to provide Employer-Assisted Housing in the form of down payment assistance. CFG provides down payment cash assistance to employees after one year of service. Eligible employees can receive a \$5,000 or \$8,000 five-year forgivable loan toward the purchase of a primary residence. The loan is

completely forgiven provided the employee remains with the company for five years (Home for Working Families, 2008).

Down payment assistance by far is the most common type of EAH program. It is simple to create and administer. Employers either directly or through a non-profit partner provide grants or forgivable loans. Often, homeownership education and counseling is required to receive the assistance. Other forms of EAH include: rental assistance, education and counseling, new construction of affordable homes, and renovation funds (Home for Working Families, 2008).



Two organizations that have taken the lead in Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) is the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) and REACH Illinois (www.reachillinois.org). In MPC's Employer-Assisted Housing model, individual businesses contribute funds to an EAH program managed by a local non-profit. For each donation the business makes, it receives state tax credits equal to 50% of their donation. The local non-profit receiving the donation then provides home buyer education and counseling and administers the EAH funds. Employees of the donating employer can receive EAH funds in the form of down payment assistance, closing cost assistance, and rental assistance. MPC's model has been extremely successful as noted in their 2006 year-end report. By the end of 2006, MPC's program provided \$1,700,000 in down

payment assistance to the employees of participating businesses (REACH Illinois, 2007). That dollar amount translates into more than 400 employees who purchased homes through the program, bringing the total number of employees assisted to over 1000 since the program began (REACH Illinois, 2007). By using a similar tax incentive available in New Hampshire, business leaders and non-profit housing counseling agencies have the ability to create an EAH program that would benefit low to moderate-income employees to bridge the home ownership affordability gap.

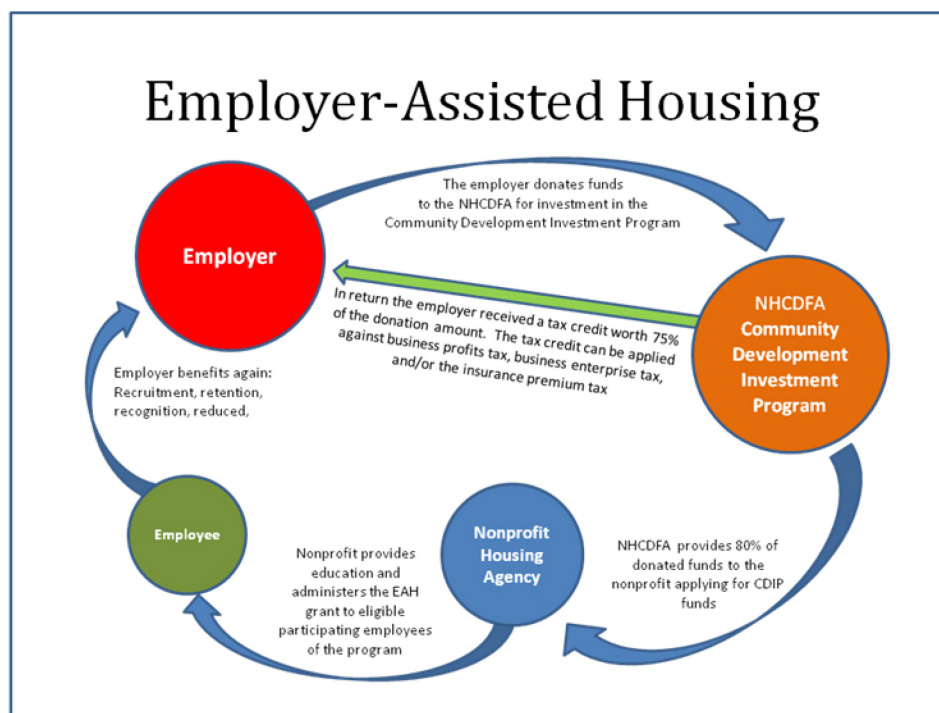
Project Design/Logic Model

Based on the model presented by the Metropolitan Planning Council, this thesis proposes the creation of an Employer-Assisted Housing program for New Hampshire. The EAH program would provide down payment and closing cost assistance to help ease the pressure on workforce/affordable housing by creating more opportunities for home ownership. If New Hampshire businesses implement such programs, the flight of our young workforce may be stemmed as they see increased value by working in New Hampshire. As Home for Working Families described, “forward-thinking companies and institutions across the country are adopting Employer-Assisted Housing programs to address the shortage of affordable homes available to their employees (Home for Working Families, 2008). We in New Hampshire need to be forward-thinking and do the same.

In New Hampshire, businesses that donate money to the Community Development Investment Program (CDIP) can receive a state tax credit of up to 75% of their donation. CDIP is administered by the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (NHCDFA). The New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority’s mission is to support “affordable housing and economic development activities that benefit low and moderate-income citizens in New Hampshire. (NHCDFA, 2009). The NHCDFA allocates the CDIP tax credits on a competitive basis to non-profits for specific projects or programs that address economic development and affordable/workforce housing issues that affect low and moderate-income residents of our state (NHCDFA, 2008). By donating money to an Employer-Assisted Housing program businesses would not only receive state tax credits worth 75% of their donation but would also be able to provide an EAH benefit to their employees. This thesis proposal, the

EAH funds generated through the CDIP grant application would be used for down payment and closing cost assistance. To receive CDIP grant funds, the EAH program must be applied for and administered by a non-profit agency. A perfect fit would be any one of the non-profit housing

counseling agencies currently serving the state. In addition to administering the CDIP grant, a non-profit housing counseling agency would also be able



to provide professional home ownership education and counseling services. See the appendix for a list of non-profit home ownership counseling agencies currently working within the state.

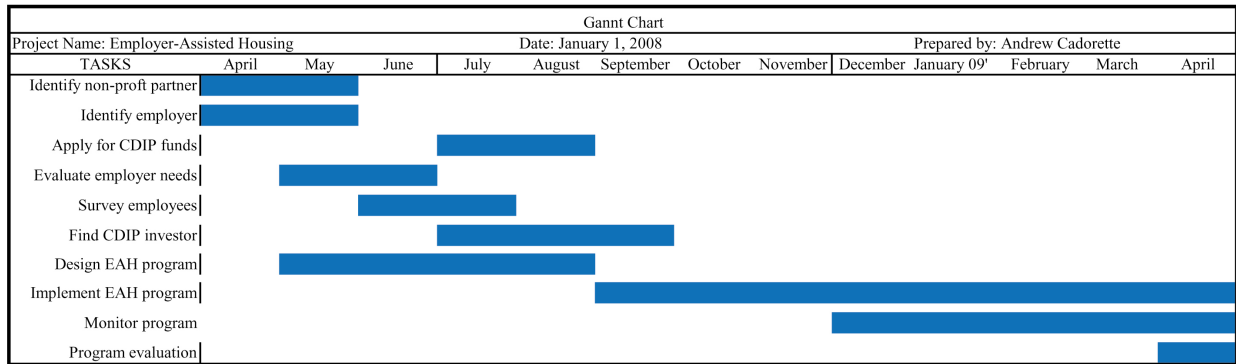
Key to this community economic development financing program would be creating a simple EAH program that is easy to administer. Similar to other successful EAH programs, the down payment assistance provided here would be tied to a five-year forgivable grant or loan. The housing counseling agency would record the EAH assistance as a forgivable lien on the property. A pro-rated amount of the grant/loan would become due if the employee left the participating company within those first five years. One of the biggest hurdles to administering an effective EAH program would be finding a business partner willing to participate in the program. Without sufficient business and industry funding the EAH program will not be viable.

Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) Logic Model

Long-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued economic growth in New Hampshire by reducing barriers to home ownership for low to moderate-income individuals and families. Continued economic growth in New Hampshire by providing employers with a qualified workforce of low and moderate-income individuals. Creation of wealth for low and moderate-income individuals and families. 			
Intermediate outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low and moderate-income individuals and families are provided affordable housing opportunities Workforce housing as a barrier to employment is negated EAH program model grows 			
Short-term outcomes	Employees see the EAH program as a benefit to employment	Employer endorses the value of the EAH program as an employee benefit	Continued partnership between public and private sector in providing EAH	Increased participation in EAH programs
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate low and moderate-income individuals about home ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 Employees purchase homes \$75,000 in tax credit incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$100,000 in tax credits are allocated to the EAH program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$75,000 in tax credit CRA credit Mortgage origination opportunity
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home buyer education and one-on-one Administration of the EAH program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial contribution from participating employers Marketing and outreach about the program to employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for and receive an allocation of tax credits through the CDIP program offered by NHC DFA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial contribution from third party investor Assist EAH program design
Inputs	Non-profit housing agency	Participating employers	Tax credit incentive - CDFA	Tax credit investor (optional input)

Methodology and Implementation Plan

By utilizing CDIP funds as a credit enhancement to promote EAH, many different possibilities exist. The CDIP tax credit alone act as an incentive to forward-thinking employers. Private employers who purchase the tax credits can use them to offset their business profit tax, business enterprise tax and/or the insurance premium tax. In addition, their donation to NHCDFA acts as a redirecting of their tax money. In the design and creation of an EAH program possibilities exist for a number of public and private partnerships. An EAH program using CDIP tax credits could be designed so that a number of participating employers purchase tax credits for a regional workforce housing EAH program. A program could also be designed to allow a private employer to purchase CDIP tax credit on behalf of a non-profit third party, such as a hospital, to benefit the community. The non-profit would not benefit from the purchase of the tax credits, but could utilize the funds raised to design its own EAH program. Lastly, an EAH program could be designed so that an employer with a workforce housing need purchases the tax credits and there by funds their own EAH program. This last example creates a double incentive for the employer who can receive tax credits, and by working through a local nonprofit, can grant back the money to its own employees. Key to the success of any EAH program is finding suitable partners, an employer to fund the project, and a non-profit to apply for the CDIP funds and administer them.



For an employer, being proactive in setting up an Employer-Assisted Housing program would greatly benefit New Hampshire and the local workforce. In New Hampshire, we are lucky to have all the suitable partners and opportunities available; strong employers, strong housing non-profits, and a credit enhancement tool. The collaboration between local businesses, the CDIP program offered through the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority and non-profit housing counseling agencies seem like a perfect fit. Problems with housing can have a negative impact on both people and businesses. Creative partnerships need to be formed in order to provide useful and effective solutions to meet the needs of our communities. Through EAH the solution to New Hampshire's workforce housing issue seems so easy.

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

The EAP program is one tool to help with the lack of workforce housing in New Hampshire. Once suitable partners have been identified and CDIP funds have been secured, the challenge of the program implementation and monitoring may begin. First, the employer must evaluate their ability to administer an EAH program and determine the number of employees that may benefit. EAH programs are designed to help low and moderate-income employees. The participating employer needs to determine how many employees are at or below 80% of the statewide median income. If the employer has the means to administer the program and there are a sufficient numbers of employees to make the program successful, then the program should proceed. Employers need to assess the area median income and how it relates to the cost of housing in their community, as well as the number of employees that are able to afford the monthly payment on a median-price home. Additionally, the employer needs to assess the average commute time for employee and the needs of the local community for housing redevelopment (Home for Working Families, 2008).

Next, the employer needs to determine the goals the EAH program. Is the EAH being created to enhance its benefits package to attract new employees or is it for employee retention and stability? If attracting a new workforce is the goal, then monitoring how many new employees accept a position at the company because of the EAH program must be monitored. If increasing employee retention and happiness is the goal, then employees must be surveyed before and after program implementation. “Common reasons for creating EAH programs are:

- Increasing employee home ownership and workforce stability
- Reducing turnover among employees

- Reducing employee commute times to improve morale, decrease tardiness and absenteeism
- Relocating and/or recruiting new employees
- Contributing to the revitalization of neighborhoods near an employer's facility (Home for Working Families, 2008)"

The employer must consider the desired goals and how to best measure them. Many times employee surveys are the simplest way in determining those needs.

To create an effective Employer-Assisted Housing program, employees must be surveyed prior to program creation to determine their current housing needs. A future follow-up survey would be instrumental in determining if program goals have been reached. Additionally, identifying specific case studies of employees who successfully participated in the EAH program would be useful creating future EAH partnerships. Qualitative ways of monitoring the effectiveness of the EAH program would include:

- Employee, community, and industry surveys
- Interviews with EAH participants

Quantitative measures of success would include:

- The number of employees who purchased homes
- The number of new hires attributed to the EAH program
- Decrease in the number of hours of absenteeism and tardiness

Specific monitoring and evaluation will depend largely on the goals originally set by the employer participating in the EAH program (see appendix for Evaluation Plan Matrix).

Sustainability Plan

The EAH program's sustainability in part depends on the economy, the availability of the tax credits, and the willingness of employers to implement such a program. Program sustainability can be built into the EAH program through the CDIP grant fund application to NHCDFA. Additionally, for the tax credit incentive to work, businesses must have the resources to purchase the tax credits. In a down economy, capital for a community development project may be tight. But as long as there is a sufficient demand for the Community Development Investment Program (CDIP) the project can sustain itself. The incentive of a 75% match for every dollar invested is a strong incentive for businesses.

The continued sustainability of an effective Employer-Assisted Housing program will benefit the community and the state as a whole. As regional businesses see the positive results of an EAH program, the hope would be that it would foster additional EAH collaborations. The increased participation of businesses in EAH programs would create jobs, wealth, and a better community or sense of place. These are three essential components of any successful community economic development project (Giloith, 1998).

Affordable housing and the workforce housing issues are not easy problems to solve. In desirable neighborhoods market demands for safe and decent housing create upward pressure on prices. This upward pressure in prices may make housing unaffordable for many low and moderate-income individuals and families. Without creative and new ways of thinking, New Hampshire employers may lose their competitive edge to other regions with lower cost housing. Employer-Assisted Housing programs may be the new employee benefit that can create incentives for our employees as well as our businesses to keep our economy strong.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For this thesis proposal, one of my very first comments I made in my first biweekly report summed up my focus for most of this experience; “Continue to educate myself and promote Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) as an option to create affordable housing.” As I attempted to find an employer willing to implement my EAH idea, I realized that I still needed to educate myself about Employer-Assisted Housing. As I approach employers in an attempt to implement my project I realized that:

- I needed further education and a better understanding of other successful EAH programs;
- as an individual it is difficult to implement my project;
- employers do not care about saving the world, they care about the bottom line;
- and finding the right partners makes all the difference.

As I looked to find an employer willing to listen to my idea, I realized I still had many holes and questions in my project design that needed to be filled. As I discussed my idea with potential partners, many questions came up that I did not know the answer to. In October, I attended a conference in Chicago on Employer-Assisted Housing sponsored by the National Association of REALTORS®. From that conference I gained two things, one, a better understanding of how to create and market an EAH program and secondly, I realized that there is a lot of movement nationally to encourage employers to offer EAH programs. The Chicago Employer-Assisted Housing conference gave me resources and the confidence I needed in discussing EAH programs with potential partners.

Soon after the conference on EAH, I set up a Google Alert to notify me of any internet news or postings about EAH programs. Since creating that original alert in October, I have

received 67 Google Alerts on Employer-Assisted Housing. The constant feedback from my Google Alert helped me to better understand who and how other EAH programs were being created. It also made me realize that by promoting EAH in New Hampshire, I was on to something; something that others across the nation have been working on and have been successful. Armed with these examples and knowledge, again, it gave me confidence to continue pushing forward to implement my project and find a suitable partner.

My second realization in my project was that as an individual it was going to be very difficult to create something new. I found that without the support of my employer, it was difficult for me to bring resources and commitment to the table. I work for an agency that supports affordable housing and workforce housing issues. In my mind, EAH is the perfect connection between the two areas of need. Workers need affordable housing, employers need affordable employees. Without my employer's commitment to promote my project, however, it has been difficult to get in the door or seriously talk about EAH with my non-profit and private partners. My employer's name brings recognition in affordable housing. Not being able to use it was disappointing and difficult. Perhaps as time goes on and my project is implemented my employer will see the benefits.

In working to bring my project to reality, a good part of time was spent on trying to figure out my third challenge; how do I sell my Community Economic Development project to the private market? Employer-Assisted Housing revolves around the idea that a private employer is willing to provide housing assistance as a human resource benefit to employees. There is time involved with implementing this, there are costs involved, and you need a certain vision to understand the benefits. So how do I sell EAH when I cannot even get my foot in the door? This meant a long search for a suitable employer and also changing my approach. I began

to realize that most employers do not care about the “feel good” purpose of EAH. What employers care about is how does it benefit “me,” and tell me quickly. This has led me to reevaluate my handouts, anticipate different questions than I originally expected, and rethink who I have been asking about being a partner.

Finally, as my project comes to an end, I am reaching positive outcomes. This has led me to my final conclusion which is, having the right partners makes all the difference. I have realized that as an individual I cannot implement this project alone. I do not have the staff, time or financial resources to make this project happen. I need partners that are willing to do the difficult work for me. I have created the idea and vision, but I need someone else to host and facilitate my project. I hope that from my conversations with the Laconia Area Community Land Trust that I have found a partner willing to apply for the Community Development Investment Program (CDIP) funds offered by the New Hampshire Community

To be successful in an Employer-Assisted Housing program you need to:

- Find a nonprofit willing to administer and apply for CDIP funding
- Find an employer willing to offer an EAH program
- Find a donor willing to provide the funding to the CDIP tax credit project

Development Finance Authority. I also believe that LACLT would be the perfect partner since they are so strongly networked into their local community and understand which employers to approach. By finding the right partner, it will help me to lighten my load, and possibly create the beginning of a successful EAH model that can be duplicated through the state.

By successfully engaging a non-profit and an employer, my outcome should be a working model of a new use for the Community Development Investment Program funds. The CDIP funds will be the “credit enhancement” tool utilized to stimulate the private market, employers, to invest in EAH programs that will help low and moderate-income persons realize affordable

housing opportunities. The impact will be two fold, one, employers who recognize the lack of workforce housing as an issue will now have a financial benefit to act and provide EAH programs. Secondly, low and moderate-income individuals will have increased opportunities for employment and affordable housing.

Unfortunately, my project has yet to be implemented. Even though my project accomplishments were not the results I had expected, I have gained a greater knowledge and understanding about the challenges associated with trying to create something new. As I continue to market and search for partners, I realize that designing a new community economic development project that crosses so many industries and viewpoints, public and private, is challenging. Many affordable housing advocates feel that incentives such as EAH programs only help with affordable housing issues in the short term. Advocates of affordable housing prefer long-term solution programs that promote permanent affordability through deed restriction and legislation. The problem with long term solutions, however, is that they take too long to address the need of employers and the work force today. EAH programs should be a tool utilized to address workforce housing issues. EAH programs have real concrete results which can impact and benefit an employer's bottom line, today.